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## Before Sok Sabay

### *Camille's Story, age 10*

When I was five my father drank heavily often and every time he would scream at my mother and beat her violently. Sometimes he asked my mother for money for alcohol. He hit my mother whenever she refused to give him the money. I felt sympathy for my Mom but I was too small and didn't know how to help her. Quite often my Dad hit me too. He would hang me by the legs and beat me with bamboo. One day he was very angry and he took me by the legs and lowered me down into the big pot full of water so that I couldn't breath. (one of the methods of torture during the Khmer Rouge era) He did the same to my younger brothers whenever the boys asked for money.

### *Lara's Story, age 11*

Whenever my Mom got angry with me, she beat me with an electrical wire or any stick she could find. When I did something wrong she gave me many hard strokes with the stick. I screamed. My skin was covered with long red tracks. My father was a moto taxi driver. I never told him how my Mom treated me. I was afraid he would beat me more. One day my mom threw a large kitchen knife at me. Luckily it missed me. I ran away into the banana plantation. Sometimes, when my mother beat me, I ran to the neighbors to ask for help.

## Letter from Marie

Dear friends,

The stories above remind me why I started Sok Sabay ten years ago. In spite of all I have seen, I still react with horror when I hear one of our recovering children describe

the torment that she experienced. Typically, it is a number of years before a child is able to talk about it. When that happens it means that much healing has taken place. This is what Sok Sabay is about.

If I had three months free for full-time correspondence, I might be able to catch up with the correspondence and thank-you that you so deserve. I apologize that I just cannot, as my time goes in so many directions with the children, the staff, visitors, fundraising, and managing our center for the children. In just the last month we rescued eleven new girls from dangerous situations in the villages. So please accept this newsletter as my attempt to keep you, our dear supporter, informed of our activities, successes, and needs.

### **Featured Students**

Sol, age:15

Brothers Mi, Do, and Little Re

Sisters: Do, Re, Fa, La, Si,

(8 of the 9 were rescued by Marie in September, 1998. They had names that were too close to distinguish!)

Career Dream: to be a lawyer

Enjoys: painting and playing with the little children.

Sol is a calm, solid, poised young woman, who looks older than her 15 years especially when she reads to or counsels the younger ones. She came to Sok Sabay at age 8. Sol speaks the English she knows with quiet confidence.

“Sok Sabay took care of me. I got clothes and food and I am able to study. Marie also helped my family. I am lucky to have two godparents, one in Utah, in the US and one in Belgium.”

Nary, age:13, two years at Sok Sabay.

Career Dream: to be a computer programmer in the United States

Enjoys: playing with her friends and taking Tai Kwon Do.

“Before Sok Sabay I was not happy. Sok Sabay has given me love, from both Marie and from the other children. My French godmother has invited me to go to school in the United States to study, learn English, and have a brand new family.”

(Nary's stepfamily were arranging to sell her into prostitution at the time of her rescue. They are still looking for her to complete the sale. She has new identification for her protection.)

### **Sok Sabay Receives Grant from Microsoft**

We were the lucky recipients in early June of the Microsoft Unlimited Potential grant. We received a two-day visit by seventeen members of the Microsoft Singapore staff. In addition to activities with the children, the staff organized the new computer room, provided new software, and trained computer teacher Mr. Rith in their use. All new computers were bought in Singapore out of previous funds raised in March, 2005. Thanks to all for your contribution. We thank in particular Katherine Bostick, Senior Director Law & Corporate Affairs who initiated this great opportunity along with Gillian Pearl (Community Affairs).

### **Marie Visits the United States**

Marie's recent trip to the United States was to build awareness of Sok Sabay and a structure for support in New York City. Among other visits, Marie gave a presentation to the Rotary Club of Bergen, Passaic, and Hudson Counties, New Jersey arranged by

Ivette Kiesel. Ivette, Joan Massey, and other club members are creating a cookbook for the sole benefit of Sok Sabay. If you have a recipe to contribute, please contact Ivette at [ivette.kiesel@altour.com](mailto:ivette.kiesel@altour.com) Thanks go to the President, Sonia Savarose for her hospitality. In all, the visit was most worthwhile in collecting help for the Sok Sabay School of Education.

### **Singapore Auction a Great Success**

Colonial black and white house, sumptuous hors d'oeuvres, generous hearts, and open purses created a glorious evening for all and a very successful result for Sok Sabay. Fifteen couples worked for three months as a team to organize and create the May event. Marie said, "I was so impressed by the energy and generosity from Singapore. It will allow us to open our New School this fall. For three months other activities came to a stop while these good people focused on the auction. And we are indebted to the Martine Hill family for providing so much by hosting the auction in their home."

### **Foundation Provides Superior Education**

The Pierre and Maria Gaetana Matisse Foundation has provided has provided a full time scholarship to one Sok Sabay child. The lucky and deserving young girl has just begun sixth grade at the American style NISC, the Northbridge International School Cambodia, and is completely thrilled with the quality of the school and the teachers. This girl will be fluent in English in no time and there is no limit to what her future may hold.

In addition, the foundation made a large contribution that is funding all our external English courses for 2005 and 2006. Eighteen of our students are attending English classes at the Australian Education Center (ACE). Our kids love the small classes and excellent teachers.

### **Intercontinental Hotel Employees Collaborate**

Valerie and Klaus Kohlmeyer of Singapore thought they'd organize a little group trip to Phnom Penh to help several organizations including Sok Sabay. Nick Gundry found out what we needed and facilitated our connection. In the end, countless members of the Singapore and Phnom Penh Intercontinental staffs worked together to collect, pack, ship, and receive many boxes of goods and to personally deliver them. The many cartons of toiletries, school supplies, clothes and more have found their home and we appreciate the tremendous efforts that it took to make it happen. Persistence prevails!

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

*Q: Is Sok Sabay an orphanage?*

A: No. The children have living parents. The parents are not able to provide for their children, but have not given their children up for adoption.

*Q: How do you find the children who come to Sok Sabay?*

A: We learn about our children through local social workers and by word of mouth. Sometimes our children who have friends or relatives they know are in danger.

*Q: How do you decide which children to take?*

A: We take children, mostly girls, who are in the most dangerous situations.

*Q: Where do the children sleep?*

A: We are like a boarding school. Our center is a large house with two floors of rooms filled with single beds or bunk beds. Adjacent to the center is the library building where we house an additional twelve children. We have nine bathrooms in the two buildings.

Q: *How would you describe the first day for a child moving into Sok Sabay?*

A: After the child is greeted she is thoroughly scrubbed for the safety of all. Then she dresses in clean clothes and receives a doll or teddy bear. She eats well and settles in with the other children. Illness and injuries are treated. We have many sets of siblings and sets of children from the same village so most children know others when they come to us. Though the new children look lost and frightened when they arrive, it is not long before smiles and laughter replace discomfort.

Q: *What is the legal international status of Sok Sabay?*

A: Sok Sabay is a registered non-profit organization in both France and Cambodia.

Q: *Can Americans make donations that are tax exempt?*

A: Yes. Make the donation to The Cambodia Children's Funds based in Tokyo. Please do contact Raj Pande at [rpande@mac.com](mailto:rpande@mac.com) or visit our website [www.soksabay.com](http://www.soksabay.com) for more information.

Q: *What does it mean to be a child's sponsor?*

A: Sponsorship covers a portion of the child's housing, food, schooling, and medical costs. Beyond the physical support, sponsorship also involves a relationship that can help the child build self worth. Both sides write letters. Some sponsors visit Sok Sabay. Others invite their children to spend a holiday with them overseas. It is best for the child if the relationship continues for a number of years. However, situations change and sponsorship can end at any time. When this occurs, the sponsor should notify Marie so that she can make new arrangements.

Q: *Is your staff made up of volunteers?*

A: No. We have twenty four paid full and part time staff members including teachers, nannies, a cook, a driver, and security personnel.

Q: *What do volunteers do?*

A: That changes with the needs of the moment. In the last year, volunteers have painted colorful murals, cataloged all the books in the community library, taught English, helped with accounting, assisted in writing this newsletter, organized parties, and as always, played with the children.

Q: *What qualities do you want in volunteers?*

A: A lengthy visit, maturity and skills. A few weeks is generally too short a time here to be valuable to us.

Q: *Do the children have responsibilities at the center?*

A: The young child's primary job is to heal and grow. As they develop a sense of security, they are expected to put effort into their schoolwork. As for chores, each child is to keep his own area clean and, if old enough, to assist with food preparation and clean-up. The older children help the younger ones in many ways such as with homework, organizing games, and settling disputes.

Q: *Do Sok Sabay children have their schooling at the center or at area schools?*

A: The answer is complicated as we use all possible resources. The local school year runs from October to late July. During those months, we have children schooled at the center, at the local Khmer school, at ACE for English enrichment, and, now, one student is also in private school. In the summer we continue many of our own classes and step up the English enrichment.

### Young Friends of Sok Sabay

Two of our talented supporters are high school student themselves. We have greatly benefited from their creativity and passion for giving.

*Trishia Pande* has created a lovely Sok Sabay calendar for the last three years. She comes to visit, collects art from the children, then has the calendars printed at her own expense. These are sold with the proceeds sent back to help the children. (Trishia is the daughter of Raj Pande and Suzanne Ridley who organized the US entity, the Cambodia Children's Fund.)

*Roxanne Alagband* attends the American School in London. She raised thousands of dollars to help the Cambodian poor and wrote of her experiences in the school's newspaper in an article entitled *What We Take for Granted*.

"My experience in Cambodia...seeing the kids in the shelter, made me realize how lucky I am to have fresh food, clean running water, proper sanitation, great education and most important of all, loving parents. Marie has received many honors for her humanitarian work around the world and was awarded as a "Hero of 1994" by Time magazine. Marie tells about the time she found the four-year-old in a dump with a plastic bag stuffed in his mouth. It makes me sad seeing people in this world taking the things for granted that the citizens of Cambodia yearn to have."

You go, girls! You are changing the world.

### Sok Sabay News

Poetes Sans Frontieres is supporting Sok Sabay with proceeds from their poetry events. On May 27, 2006 they held a gala affair of a poetry musical and dinner at Chatel-Guyon, France. The president Vital Heurtebize has been very kind to promote our organization as the group's sole beneficiary. In their April – June issue of *L'Etrave* Sok Sabay was noted and one of our godparents wrote a lovely poem about her goddaughter Srei Tuth (Judith).

*House Building Helps Families* In the last three years Sok Sabay has purchased land and built homes for about ten of the most desperate families of our children. More homes need to be built. When poor families in the area lose their land, many children suffer.

*Tai Kendo Classes Begin* Sok Sabay has two new talented young Tai Kendo teachers. They are on campus for three classes each Saturday and Sunday teaching the students to increase focus, coordination, and self esteem. The kids are loving it!

*The Community Library Takes Shape* Valentin Renollet and Aurelie Hoffman from the ISTOM School in Paris are spending their field study time with us and are well on their way to completing the development of our new Community Library. They began with a roomful of mixed books that they sorted, cataloged, and labeled for three weeks. We are

developing a list of local volunteers to run the program. The librarians will open the doors to our own children and to children of the neighboring families a few hours a day. Our collection includes about 3,000 Khmer, English, and French books. The opening is scheduled for August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2006, at 11:00 am. Time to party!

*Heart Surgery Planned for October* Seven year old Judy came to us earlier this year very ill from malnutrition. She was diagnosed with a heart valve defect that will be repaired in Singapore by the KK Hospital. The hospital is generously covering all surgery fees to give Judy a healthy heart.

### **Spirit of Cambodia Sales Going Well**

The beautiful book dedicated to the children of Sok Sabay features the pen and water color art of Marie-Lys Amiel. It is currently selling in Singapore France, Norway, Switzerland, Japan, and Belgium. Closer to home, the *Monument Bookstores* at the Phnom Penh and Siem Reap airports (Cambodia) are carrying it as are shops in Vientian and Lao Prabang. The proceeds benefit Sok Sabay. If you are interested in receiving a copy, e-mail Marie at [soksabay@online.com.kh](mailto:soksabay@online.com.kh)

### **School and Organization Friends Around the World**

Greetings and gratitude to so many schools and organizations that help us in our mission. They include:

- The ANZA Quilt Group, Singapore
- The American School in London
- The Community American School of Abu Dhabi
- The German European School of Singapore
- The Hollandse School of Singapore
- The Japan American School in Tokyo
- Lycee Francais de Singapore
- Nanyang Polytechnic, Singapore
- Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Singapore
- Positronic Asia, Pte. Ltd.
- Saint Ursule, Dole , France
- The Seven Oaks School in London
- The Singapore American School
- Victoria Junior College
- World Council of Churches

### **Our Rotary Friends**

We appreciate you!

District 3310

- Rotary Club of Queenstown, Singapore
- Rotary Club of Changi, Singapore
- Rotary International; Malaysia District Governor

District 7490

- Rotary Club of Bergen, Passaic, and Hudson Counties, New Jersey, USA

## Creative Giving

Our Dutch angels Frank Wester of the Life Foundation and Leo Nagtegaal along with Arie Koortens, of MODUSPEC Engineering, and the Rotary Club of Walcheren, Zeeland sponsor the math and computer teachers' salaries and general education at Sok Sabay.

The American School in London has paid for all our rice over the last two years. This is a staple of our Cambodian diet. We use 300 kg (660 pounds) of rice in two weeks, so that's a lot of rice. You are feeding close to seventy people each day!

Francois de Moulliac, the Regional Director of the Ayam Brand and Denis Freres Company provides money for quality foods such as tuna, beans, and sardines to increase the children's daily nutrient intake. We have turned to him in times of emergency, such as when someone needed surgery, or a family needed a house, and he always responded with help. Francois and his wife also sponsor a child and helped fund the ***Spirit of Cambodia*** book project.

The American Community School of Abu Dhabi has been supporting Sok Sabay for several years and a group of students and teachers will be visiting Sok Sabay in April, 2007 for six days. One time they supplied us with a year's supply of toiletries. This year they are doing a walk-a-thon where they collect sponsors for walking or running laps around the school. This has been a very successful way to raise money for Sok Sabay. Kayla Duperreault is the president of their Sok Sabay Committee. See their web site at [www.acs.sch.ae](http://www.acs.sch.ae)

What do you give the person who has everything? Sissi and James Lorentzen are spreading the concept of giving birthday donations in the names their friends. We just received a fat check honoring the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday of Mr. Jens Wilhelmsen. Christian Pauli from Rhode & Liesenfeld Overseas Pte Ltd transport/ Singapore had contributed greatly to help Sok Sabay by sending boxes of Spirit of Cambodia books around the world to promote it. His commitment and kindness merit an award! Candida Pauli organized an excellent buffet for our auction which was one of the best in the town!

## Thanks and More Thanks to our Child Sponsors

**Your devotion and compassion heal the bodies, warm the hearts, and lift the spirits of our rescued children. We are so grateful that the means to continue the work comes through. Some donors prefer not to have their names printed and the list is too long to include anyway. But, be assured that it is because of YOU that Sok Sabay continues to protect precious young lives. Your halo shines!**

## Wish List

In spite of so many generous donations, the needs of 63 lively children and teenagers continually challenge our resources. We work to raise the quality of the education, the physical and mental health, and the future possibilities for all. Here are some of our current needs. If you or someone you know can help support us in new ways large or small, it will make life easier for the children.

*Sponsor a child.* Fifteen of our children currently need sponsors. (\$800 per year)

*Buy a new tuk-tuk.* This is for transporting children to school and medical appointments.

Our current vehicle, though much loved, is on its last legs. (\$1,200)

*Provide daily soy milk.* (\$240 per month or \$2,880 per year)

*Cover medical costs. (\$100 - \$10,000)*

*Buy a large capacity clothes dryer (\$700)*

*Provide decay prevention treatments of fluoride and tooth sealants. (\$15 per child)*

*Fund a scholarship for private school (\$10,000)*

*Fund twenty brilliant youngsters to attend a quality preschool.*

*Purchase a new TV and DVD player for our TV room. (\$900)*

*Contribute supplies for our new community library. We need posters, dictionaries, geography books, a world atlas, and science books.*

*Volunteer to teach music. (Organize a choir? Teach recorder? Stimulate interest in playing an instrument?)*

*Volunteer to train teachers for the New School (professional educator).*

*Cover the cost of new teaching materials for the New School. (\$500)*

*Fund a new home for the family of a Sok Sabay child. (at least \$1,300)*

*Sponsor the administrator of the New School (\$2,000 per month)*